

DelDOT Secretary Bhatt Selected to lead Colorado Transportation Department

Will conclude productive tenure at agency at the end of the month

Wilmington – Secretary Shailen Bhatt will conclude a three and a half year tenure leading Delaware’s Department of Transportation (DelDOT) at the end of this month to accept a nomination by Governor John Hickenlooper to serve as Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT).

“Shailen has done an excellent job enhancing the State’s transportation network while earning the respect of his colleagues and the trust of our citizens,” said Governor Jack Markell. “The agency faced numerous challenges over the past several years, including the need to address a significant debt load and respond to severe weather events, but under his leadership DelDOT tackled those challenges with dedication and professionalism. While this is a big loss for the State of Delaware, I am happy he’ll have the opportunity to work with one of the best governors in the country and am confident Shailen’s experience and leadership skills will have a positive impact in Colorado.”

Secretary Bhatt was appointed by Markell in 2010. Prior to his term as Delaware’s Secretary of Transportation, he served in several leadership roles throughout the country, including Associate Administrator at the Federal Highway Administration in Washington, D.C., Deputy Executive Director with the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, and Director of the Bowling Green/Warren County Metropolitan Planning Organization.

“Throughout my career I’ve tried to go where I felt I could do the most good, looking for opportunities to make meaningful

contributions as a public servant,” said Bhatt. “I appreciate the opportunity Governor Markell gave me and I will always treasure the time I’ve spent in Delaware. It’s been an honor to lead Team DelDOT. I’m very proud of the people I served with and appreciate their unwavering support and enthusiastic commitment towards improving Delaware’s transportation system.”

Key accomplishments advancing Governor Markell’s transportation agenda include:

- **Infrastructure and Quality of Life Investments:** The Department has completed or initiated a number of major transportation projects:
 - Indian River Inlet Bridge
 - Highway speed electronic toll lanes on I-95
 - Elkton Road improvements (Newark)
 - South Market Street improvements (Wilmington)
 - Route 54 improvements (Sussex County)
 - Delaware City DMV facility
 - Opening of the I-95 / SR 1 interchange
 - Completing the I-95 / Route 202 interchange
- **First State Trails and Pathways Initiative:** DelDOT teamed with DNREC to deliver on Governor Markell’s commitment to build a first class trails network in the First State. Since 2010, more than \$14 million has been invested in the creation of new or improved biking and pedestrian facilities. These trails and pathways better connect Delaware’s communities and improve health and recreational opportunities for citizens and visitors alike. Delaware now ranks as the 4th Bicyclist Friendly State in 2014, according to the League of American

Bicyclists.

- **Strengthened Financial Stewardship:** The department reigned in its operating budget while reducing debt. The department's operating budget excluding storm related funds decreased each year since FY12, and debt obligations were reduced by 30% (\$369 million) from a peak of \$1.2 billion in FY11 to under \$865 million in FY15. The department maintained an investment grade credit rating of Aa2/AA+ from Moody's and Standard & Poor, respectively.
- **Transit Redesign:** The operations of DART First State have been revamped to control costs and improve transit services to create more convenient transportation options for all Delawareans. Changes included expanding fixed route services in New Castle County and Kent County by offering extended hours and expanded weekend service, increasing fares, distinguishing services areas inside and outside the ADA area, and utilizing the existing 5310 program to work with non-profit partners to provide alternative services for their clients. In addition, DTC launched a Flex Service program providing connections between Georgetown, Millsboro and Lewes as an alternative for people to travel to a destination one mile off of fixed route, as opposed to using paratransit.
- **Improved Customer Service:** DelDOT has focused on providing excellent customer service, whether to the driving public, passengers on buses, developers, car dealers or customers at the division of motor vehicles. The agency is actively tracking customer feedback to identify areas that need improvement. The following are some of the initiatives that have been implemented in the **Division of Motor Vehicles** which served over 630,000 customers in the past year with an average wait time of 13 minutes.

- **Expand Customer Service and Outreach to Certain Driving Populations:** DMV continues to expand its customer service outreach to Hispanic, senior and teen populations through increased participation in community events and public relation efforts.
 - **Automate Customer Satisfaction Survey for DMV:** DMV added a customer service satisfaction survey question to the end of customer transactions via the credit card device at each station to increase our number of responses. The results show overall services at 99% excellent or good.
 - **Expand Services at DMV Kiosks:** Self-service kiosks now allow customers to complete driver license renewals, duplicates and address changes, as well as registration renewal.
 - **Print on Demand Temporary Tag Program:** To increase the level of service to the state's auto dealers, the division expanded the use of the print-on-demand temporary tag program to the majority of Delaware new car dealers. The program allows for auto dealers to print temporary tags on demand at their facilities instead of pre-purchasing tags (inventory) from the DMV and handwriting the vehicle information on the tags.
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- **Improved Development Coordination:** Recognizing the vital role DelDOT plays in the success of economic development in the state, the agency set a performance goal that staff must provide comments on development plans within 45 days of receipt. To date, DelDOT is meeting this goal the overwhelming majority of the time. This provides the development community with predictability in the permitting process. Through the review of agency regulations under Executive Order #36,

DelDOT modified its multi-use path policy and created a “Letter of No Contention” approval to process plans that have fewer than 199 average daily trips. This process is especially helpful to small businesses trying to develop or expand.

- **Transportation Improvement Districts:** Through the creation and implementation of Transportation Improvement Districts (TIDs), communities now have an opportunity to work with the local land use department and DelDOT to determine the appropriate size of transportation improvements in identified growth zones. Predetermined traffic counts and streamlined technical assistance will help developers accelerate the permitting process, saving time and money in the construction of new homes and businesses.
- **Reform of the Capital Transportation Program Process:** The department undertook the process of creating a data driven project prioritization processes that uses performance metrics to guide decision-making. Using a software tool called Decision Lens; the department has created a project evaluation and ranking system that ensures projects are consistent with the mission, vision and goals of the department; especially with regard to their ability to create a safer transportation system in Delaware.
- **Implementation of the 2011 Transportation Trust Fund Task Force Report Recommendations:** The 2011 Transportation Trust Fund Task Force (Task Force) studied the entire transportation program for the period Fiscal Year 2012-2023 and concluded that total spending for transportation expenses over the period could reasonably be estimated to total \$12.4 billion and that current revenue streams will support only 70% of those needs. The result of that imbalance, if not corrected, would be either the elimination of all new capital

projects by 2017 or severe reductions in the Department's Core Program resulting in an accelerated deterioration of Delaware's transportation infrastructure. The Task Force put forth a list of recommendations to address the financial challenges facing the department. DelDOT acted on a number of these recommendations, including reducing borrowing, keeping operating costs level, creating a more sustainable business model for transit, and making more intelligent use of available dollars through the adoption of a data-driven capital spending process. Creating a sustainable stream of revenue for the trust fund remains the overarching unrealized recommendation in the task force report, however. As the report stated, "the essential goal in correcting the structural problem of funding the TTF is to create a sustainable stream of revenue which supports an appropriately sized capital program to meet the State's infrastructure needs."

In his new role, Secretary Bhatt will lead the Department in planning for and addressing Colorado's transportation needs. He will oversee 3,300 employees statewide and an annual budget of approximately \$1 billion to help CDOT continue its mission of providing the best multi-modal transportation system for Colorado that safely and most effectively moves people, goods and information.

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